DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 202 619 RC 012 701

AUTHOR Wagoner, Gordon
TITLE Curriculum Expansion Efforts of a Small High School. Report.
INSTITUTION Liberty School District, Spangle, Wash.
PUB DATE 17 Jun 81
NOTE 13p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Career Counseling; Career Exploration; *Correspondence Study; Curriculum Enrichment; Disabilities; Disadvantaged; Dropout Rate; *High School Students; *Individualized Instruction; *Program Effectiveness; Rural Schools; School Districts; Secondary Education; Sex Stereotypes; *Small Schools; *Vocational Education
IDENTIFIERS Liberty High School WA; Washington (Spangle)

ABSTRACT

Liberty High School's experimental project using correspondence courses to expand curriculum offerings, begun in 1977, increased vocational offerings from 12 to nearly 2,000 by 1979 and provided career exploration opportunities for its 187 students. All students and incoming freshmen for 1977-78 had an opportunity to select at least one correspondence vocational course which matched their interests or needs. Students were counseled during the course selection process and given the California Occupational Preference System to help determine their interests. The Occupation Outlook Handbook helped them select courses to conform with job market needs. Trial lessons were used to determine students' abilities to cope with chosen courses. Because two teachers and an aide were assigned to the correspondence students, the program provided individualized instruction. Student involvement doubled from the first year to the second (from 11% of the student body enrolled the first year to 24% the second year); the students were more committed to their training than most regular students. Male and female students were encouraged to break stereotypes by trying areas of interest rather than those dictated by tradition. The project also gave many opportunities to special needs students (handicapped and disadvantaged). There were no school dropouts during the project. (CM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Stephenson S. Youngerman, Ph.D.
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

LIBERTY SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 362
SPANGLE, WASHINGTON 99031
PHONE 245-3229

Stephenson S. Youngerman, PhD.
Superintendent of Schools

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

JUN 19
ERIC/C
RECEIV

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Barbara Kusterer
Chairman
Bill Lee Gary Schafer
Darrell Flaig Ron Hahner

ED202619

CURRICULUM EXPANSION EFFORTS OF A SMALL HIGH SCHOOL REPORT

In December of 1976 a Native American student, a senior at Liberty high school, at Spangle, Washington approached his school counselor about the possiblity of taking a course by correspondence for high school credit. He had sent for information from a magazine ad offering training for a person interested in the Fish and Game Management Field (Game Warden).

The boy had not been very successful in the limited offerings of his high school of 170 students.

The counselor, Mr. Gordon Wagoner, took the idea to the school Superintendent, Dr. Stephenson Youngerman, who immediately gave the idea his full approval.

Dr. Youngerman had already tested similar commercial vocational correspondence courses as part of the educational system in the Idaho State Prison System in 1975.

Here it had worked extremely well with prison inmates and he believed it could be adapted to expand the curriculum of a small high school as well.

Funding would certainly be a problem since these courses are relatively expensive. Our student was anxious to get started and thought he would have no trouble financing his course through his Indian Agency once he had school approval.

The student began working with his tribal agency and the superintendent and the counselor started laying plans to test the idea on a broader scale the following year.

The legality of the system was checked through the legal office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the State of Washington and found to be within the law.

An advisory meeting was called of community members by Gordon Wagoner who also was serving as vocational director of the Liberty School District. After the plan was explained by Dr. Youngerman the plan for an experimental model was approved by the community representatives provided grant monies could be obtained to finance the project.

Gordon Wagoner was commissioned to locate and apply for the grant or grants.

Two grants were approved in the Spring of 1977. This gave the project planners an opportunity to run two separate experiments both of which needed to be tested.

One was a trial with strictly vocational courses and the other with academic and non-vocational courses.

During this time the pilot model with the Native American student bogged down in red tape as he was shuttled from one office to another with no definate answers.

As the school year neared its end the plan to run the one student pilot

RC 012 701

test was abandoned as time ran out and the student was about to graduate.

Meantime momentum of plans for the following year accelerated. A survey was taken of the junior class to see how they would react to a dramatic increase in course options from the list of courses from the Accrediting Commission of Correspondence schools.

Of the 40 students in the junior class, 37 different subjects were chosen showing a diversity of interest far greater than anything previously suspected. From this picture a philosophy emerged where the project would not simply try to expand subject offerings a little in general but would try to meet the real needs and interests of all the students for at least one period and subject per day. A concept which has been beyond the capacity of even most large high schools.

The next step was to collect information and catalogs from every correspondence school that could be found and students began pouring over the listings as they came in.

A few of the students who were too anxious to wait till fall, had their orders ready as school closed so they could be ordered during the summer as soon as funds became available.

By fall 1977 the listings had grown to nearly a thousand courses of every description.

Part of the plan had been to try to anticipate student reactions and performance so the grant monies would be carefully and effectively used.

Operating from preconceived knowledge of high school students those deemed eligible to order correspondence courses was limited to mature students (juniors and seniors) and to those considered by their teachers to be capable of independent study.

As an additional experiment a few special needs, handicapped and special education students were allowed to try courses without restrictions.

The results were not in line with staff expectations. If the course materials were within the reading levels of the special needs students, they performed better on the whole than the high achieving more mature students who had been approved by their teachers.

By October 1978 a Correspondence Center had been developed and staffed with a Secretary/Aide to manage ordering, receiving and helping correspondence students.

As the dual projects progressed problems began to surface which had to be dealt with through modification in the operations.

The problems stemmed largely from preconceived ideas which broke down in practice as with the carefully selected students.

It had been thought that the high interest generated with free selection of courses would carry the students through the daily study grind. It was also believed that students could study these lessons almost anywhere, the back of a classroom where another subject was being taught, a study hall, a teachers office or at home. It was expected that a student assigned to the teacher in the area most closely related to the correspondence course would afford the student encouragement and special help.

It was assumed that courses and services from the correspondence schools would be of high quality.

The vocational work with tools and projects was thought feasible within the regular classroom and lab areas.

All of these pre-conceptions proved very wrong when tested.

Sound deadened study carrels were eventually built to isolate correspondence students and supply work bench areas for projects.

Through trial and error it was soon learned that there were some excellent schools and excellent courses and there were also many very bad

to poor courses. The vocational type courses from private correspondence schools proved best most often but also very expensive. The college engineered courses in general were the poorest but by far the least expensive. One notable exception being the State University of North Dakota where the cost was the least and the quality of materials and services among the best.

A great deal of careful painstaking research needs to be done in this area before any useful recommended list could be established for really excellent courses for high school students. They do exist, finding them is difficult and expensive.

An entirely new system of producing and distributing correspondence type courses is needed.

Liberty School District is looking into several such new systems but expect it to take several years to perfect even one of these new systems, under local funding, as future grant funds become less available.

As it was found that correspondence students were largely neglected and ignored by most teachers the aide ended up as the main support person for these students through the 1978-79 school year. The next fall two teachers were assigned a correspondence class and each worked only with correspondence students one period per day. This was a great improvement as it became clear that a high school student needs the same motiviating factors, support and encouragement whether doing regular lessons or correspondence work.

It also became apparent that the correspondence student needs some slightly different considerations for optimum performance. Once the student has in hand his carefully chosen course he or she should have a specially designed independent studies laboratory with sound proof carrels, work benches, project storage etc. and a special brand of teacher learning manager dedicated to independent and individualized learning.

After the grants had both run out, the academic and non-vocational in June 1978 and the vocational in January 1979 the Liberty School District had found enough merit in the program to budget money to continue the program on its own.

With greatly reduced funding the program was reduced to no staff and was run out of the counselors office with student aides helping in the correspondence center for the 1979-1980 school year. Students worked on their courses in regular study halls through this year with a resultant deterioration of work habits for many. Also the less expensive college supplied courses were heavily relied on. Consequently many students switched to and bogged down in academic subjects.

What few vocational courses were furnished continued to show good results. The pattern of excellent results on vocational type of courses and poor results on academic types as established during the two grant funded projects, continued.

The only new forward step during this year was adding Community college courses and dissemination of information to other small schools in Washington State.

In 1980-81 a teacher manager was again assigned to the program with correspondence periods and study halls combined.

The students were all required to explore their courses before making a commitment to do a complete course which was then done under contracted study.

Minor refinements were constantly made over the four years the system has been operating as misconceptions and defects were corrected.

The program works better each year with only minor set backs. Students attitudes have had to undergo change as was the case of the staff who

worked with it.

It has now settled into a stable pattern. It is again planned as part of the curriculum at Liberty High School for the 1981-82 school year with a few more modifications taking place as needed.

Barring unforseen problems it appears this special system for utilization of correspondence courses in the small high school to expand the curriculum in a dramatic fashion and meet the many varied needs and interests of students of these small schools could well become a permanent part of their curriculums.

At Liberty High School the pattern already seems firmly established as it goes into its fifth year. Improvements will continue to be made. A specially designed laboratory is in the planning stage and the search for better courses and delivery systems will go on.

An unexpected bonus discovered in the program which turned up early in the operation was the career exploration opportunities inherent in the system. The used and left over materials could be used to give students a realistic sampling of what a course or vocation really requires. Also courses can be ordered tried and returned at nominal cost if they prove unsatisfactory, again giving the students an opportunity to see first hand what a study area requires.

This is now a special part of Liberty High's correspondence/independent studies system. Students unsure of a career goal or a subject area interest can explore one course after another to earn a credit and gain valuable experience.

APPENDIX A

LIBERTY SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 362

SPANGLE, WASHINGTON 99031

PHONE 245-3229

Stephenson S. Youngerman, PhD.
Superintendent of Schools

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Barbara Kusterer
Chairman
Bill Tee Gary Schafer
Darrell Flaig Ron Hahner

A PROJECT REPORT

EXPANDING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION THROUGH CORRESPONDENCE

January 30, 1979
Revised: November 1979

Exemplary Project #77-AXC (162) N.C.

Financed by a Federal Grant under Title 1, Part C, Section 131 (b) of Public Law #90-576 through the Research Coordinating Unit of the Washington State Commission for Vocational Education.

During the school year 1976-77 before this project was started, Liberty High School offered 12 regular vocational subjects in its two programs designed to train students for gainful employment, Agriculture and Business and Office. When school opened in the fall of 1977 our correspondence project had increased this to several hundred and by January 31, 1979 we had listings of more than 1800 vocational courses from which our students could make selections. During the next three semesters under the project subjects actually chosen by students from these offerings numbered 37 involving 40 different students. The number of students involved does not equal the number of subjects because occasionally more than one student took the same course and a few students finished one course then went on to take a more advanced course. As examples one boy took a small engines course then went on to take a motorcycle repair course. Another, a future farmer, completed a diesel mechanics course, went on to take a course in heavy equipment operation and then to take one in machine lathe operation.

This wide diversity of needs and interests found outside regular programs in the small population of 187 students at Liberty High School, is highly indicative that student interests in small high schools are not being met and probably cannot be met through traditional vocational offerings.

Liberty High Schools small school population might not be typical, however, the high level of interest shown by other small schools throughout the state of Washington in what we are doing with correspondence types of courses points to considerable need for a revamped and greatly expanded vocational curriculum for small high schools.

Measured against its major objective: To expand the "vocational" offerings of a small high school, the project can be seen as a dramatic success.

With their vocational choices no longer limited to what a severely restricted curriculum could offer. We could now help the student match his or her real interests and abilities with at least one course in a freely elected field.

When our first 40 students survey sample of our total 1976-77 junior class were first exposed to this dramatic expansion of vocational offerings they reacted with disbelief. When they finally realized that they really did have the freedom to choose any course they wished, there was a flurry of excitement and anticipation.

For those who were uncertain or had no vocational or career plans the reaction usually was to launch a serious career search.

The project was also highly successful overall in meeting its minor objectives.

For sub-objective #1 we had planned to expose, 37 seniors and 47 juniors in

1977-78 to many new job possibilities via correspondence courses. This total of 84 students was greatly exceeded because of an extension of the project for an extra semester and because we found that it could work for younger students as well as or better than for those about to graduate and especially well for special needs students whose rate of progress is usually impeded. Thus all seniors in the class of 1977-78, all 78-79 seniors, all 78-79 juniors and all 78-79 sophomores were given the opportunity to select at least one vocational course from these hundreds of offerings during the funding period. All special needs students also were afforded this opportunity and before the projects end we were able to offer all our 1978-79 freshmen a chance to select a course.

Thus all the students who were attending Liberty High in 1977-78 and all the freshmen who arrived in 1978-79 had an opportunity to select at least one "vocational course" which would match their interests. We thus exceeded this objective considerably supplying the opportunity for 225 students rather than the projected 84.

For our sub-objective #2 we expected to increase our total vocational subject offerings from 15 to at least several hundred. The total now is approaching 2000 courses with the list constantly growing.

Sub-objective #3 aimed at having at least 20 students actually select courses from the total new listings by the end of the 1977-78 school year.

Twenty students were enrolled and all but 1 or 2 were well into their course by June 1978. In addition, by April 1978, 39 students including returning students who had not finished, pre-registered for courses for the fall of 1978-79. Numerically exceeding the original objective of 20 students by 19.*

One of our most interesting and perhaps significant findings came out of our failure to meet one of the parts of this sub-objective.

We had projected that through careful vocational counseling and careful study and selection of the vocational field and their "vocational" correspondence course, 100% of the students selecting courses would be able to select a course which matched their interests.

We found from experience that some students regardless of careful counseling and selection methods did not like the course they had chosen and often ended up with a near zero interest in the subject under study and often ask to change to an entirely new field.

The reasons given by our students for this phenomenon are too diverse to draw conclusions from but some of the implications deserve mentioning:

1. Interest, though a critical ingredient to serious pursuit of a career, seems fragile, whimsical and easily misplaced and no amount of academic reading about, counseling or excitement about can assure that this factor will be pinned down.

We are convinced that realistic training or course work which the prospective worker must master in order to enter a job in many but not all cases can crystalize the students vocational interests or lack of real interest.

The world is full of people who trained for one field then found when they tested themselves on the job that they had invested their time and money in the wrong field, and only then switched their vocation to an entirely different area. This occurs too often whether they received their training at a university, a community college, a trade school or some other kind of school. Using the correspondence courses as the testing ground may not be fool proof but it can work quite well and is certainly less painful and relatively less expensive than experimenting with jobs, vocational school or college. It would be far better to allow students the chance to try out vocational courses on an individual basis and when and if after a good try, they find their interest disintegrating, allow or even encourage them to change to another course or area of study.

This can be arranged with correspondence courses easily, cheaply and without disruption of the educational structure. Our regular courses cannot since they

* See statistical supporting data in the outside evaluation addended to this report.

operate with set offerings on locked schedules and overwhelmingly under group instruction.

A great deal more research will be required regarding the value of "vocational" correspondence course exploration in determining real vocational interests but the spin-off we experience here looks very promising.

Surprisingly we were able to come much closer to our goal so far as students abilities to handle the course work than in matching interests. Our objective was to match 90% of our students with their courses so far as ability to handle the work was concerned. Of the 43 vocational subjects chosen only three students dropped them because they were too difficult. Of these three, two had reading problems. One of the two is classified as academically handicapped and is taking special education classes. This student tried and dropped two courses trying to follow her measured and stated interests but found them to difficult. On the third try she did find a course that was in her interest areas and matched her abilities. At the time of this writing she was progressing very well, enjoying her course and learning the feeling of success. No student dropped their course because it was too easy. (Some did report their courses too easy after they were completed.)

For sub-objective #4 there was to have been no increase in staff and for the first year of operation there was none but we did hire a secretary/aide who was indispensible in ordering courses and materials and in setting up our files in our correspondence center. She performed all the secretarial and clerical work connected with the grant. In addition she also kept up student records and did a great deal in the way of motivation and moral support. The second year the project ran without hiring any extra staff, however we did shift two teachers for a class period per day from regular classes which were too small to manage a class of correspondence students. Any new program naturally displaces staff and a highly successful new program will cause significant enrollment drops in less popular elective programs in a small school. This was our experience and it convinced us that the best way to make this type of program work is to give it the same status as regular programs with its own teacher/manager and its own room or learning lab.

One of our teachers was a vocational teacher, the other was not but both became quite expert in managing a student centered individualized learning situation. Any teacher assigned to supervise a group of correspondence students is certain to learn a great deal about individualized study and the independent student. This was a hoped for result which did develop for our teachers with correspondence classes. It was clearly demonstrated that efforts to get teachers to individualize instruction can be smoothly and easily initiated via correspondence management.

As with our vocational teacher, correspondence management will require very little adjustment for most vocational teachers since they are already trained to handle individualized instruction.

We found that one original theory that students could work on their correspondence courses in the back of a regular class or in a regular study hall did not work very well for most students.

However, a later arrangement with isolated sound proofed study carrels available for project work and a teacher assigned to work only with correspondence students works very well.

It works so well in fact that given high quality correspondence courses the major bugaboo of correspondence study, the extremely high dropout rate can be alleviated. In the properly arranged high school setting this dropout rate can be changed to a holding rate as high or higher than regular classes. Of those who do drop a correspondence class nearly all students can be picked up again under open entrance open exit by allowing them to shift courses or to start a series of sampling or explorations of independent studies. Other pluses regarding dropouts are the potentials of students being picked up as they drop out of other classes and the holding power of a course which a potential dropout really wants to learn.

After one and one half years of the project, no student taking a vocational correspondence course had dropped out of our school but we are sure that several potential dropouts remained in school because of them.

The unhealthy practice of holding students in elective courses they despise or otherwise do not want or cannot cope with has always seemed a necessity in small schools. This correspondence/independent studies program provides an easy and simple means to improve on these scheduling problems and could well be one of the better things that can happen in the elective part of secondary education.

In regards to continuing the program; one month after the end of the project we had students still pursuing vocational correspondence courses and we do not expect any let up in the future. As students and teachers learn more about it, it continues to grow and we expect the growth in popularity and participation to continue until we reach a saturation point where all of our students who want a vocational program are studying a vocational subject in their 'enlightened' area of interest, working within their range of ability and hopefully toward a vocation that needs and wants their skills, knowledge and services.

This last part, is impossible to guarantee but we require our correspondence students to study the job market and the outlook for their chosen careers which they plan to pursue through correspondence study, far more intensely and with more consistency than most small high schools require before students are enrolled in regular vocational courses.

Our correspondence research and experimental project strongly supports the theory that correspondence and similar teaching-learning methods incorporated with regular high school vocational efforts, can greatly improve the vocational potential of small high schools.

We are convinced after testing it with the 187 student population at Liberty High School that it is a viable system which can work in other small schools.

More testing is needed over a longer period of time to more fully develop and perfect it but the potential is there.

One big problem which has overshadowed the project from the start could easily stop development dead in its tracks. This is the approval and acceptance procedures and limitations imposed on all public school vocational programs by governing bodies.

Most of the vocational correspondence courses taken by our students under this project meet the basic criteria for vocational education, that is: "preparation for a job or preparation for their next vocational step," and it has some advantages over our regular programs such as free and open choice, open entry open exit, individualized, less costly per student hour and per work station and our research indicates that correspondence learning of theory has a slight edge over regular classroom instruction. There is a definate tendency toward mastery learning and consequently better grades.

Students were not selected to fit the program or registered into a program regardless of how they fit, in each case the program was selected by the student to fit his or her needs and interests.

All students were counseled during their course selection process and all were given the California Occupational Preference System to help them determine their interests. The Occupation Outlook Handbook was used to help them select their courses to conform with job market needs. The trial lessons or exploratory phase of the courses were used to determine their abilities to cope with their courses.

In general these students were far more committed to their training than most regular students. The courses were all designed as training for a job or occupation, and we found by having employers look over samples of the work that they indeed considered the correspondence learning appropriate for the occupation. Further support for the vocational appropriateness of the studies is the fact that business and industry all over the world contracts with some of these same schools to set up training programs for their workers. Many of the same courses and correspondence units designed for industry are available to and were used by our students.

The limited conventional vocational offerings and training opportunities plaguing small high schools is not apt to change much even with tremendous efforts and costs. Such things as skill centers since they are nearly always found in large cities cannot reach the majority of rural students.

As things now exist, students in small conventional high schools must be satisfied with the very limited offerings which these schools can muster, often ignoring student interests, aptitudes, abilities or the requirements of the job market. Yet these factors ought to be the real vocational educational determinants in small high schools much as they are in other vocational training institutions.

Expanding "vocational" offerings through correspondence and similar courses, could pave the way for some real significant change in this direction.

By Gordon Wagoner, Project Director

APPENDIX B

Supplement to Report on Correspondence Project, "Expanding Vocational Education Through Correspondence"

Liberty High School
May 31, 1979

This report will look at some comparison figures between the regular vocational program costs and the effectiveness of the correspondence program in costs and value to students.

Setting

Liberty district is set in rural farm country. It draws students from small communities in the area. The average family income exceeds $9,500 and the average adult education is a little beyond 12 years.

Cost comparison in the area of Vocational F.T.E.'s shows this difference:

State Average	$1,900.
Cheney High School	2,045.
Liberty High School	2,898.

Cheney is a slightly larger district nearby. The expense at Liberty and size limited the vocational offerings until the correspondence program. There are no comparison figures in the area of correspondence since this is a unique program. Just the average cost to educate one student is much higher at Liberty: State average is $1,524 compared to $2,657. It is the feeling of this evaluator that expanding the course offerings by correspondence is cost effective.

General Statistics

The total grant for the project was $16,000. This included: $1500 for initial "start-up" costs to build study carrels and storage facilities. The period of the grant covered from June 1977 through January 1979. The program has been taken over by LHS with the hopes of continued funding for next year.

The total student course hours was 55 for the period of the grant.[1] The cost per student for the period of the grant was $290. which includes all the start-up costs. This is compared to the regular vocational cost per student hour of $483. There is a margin in the cost per student work station. An example would be the cost for a single student work station in a machine shop would come to about $5000 new. The study carrel work station for the correspondence students cost $1500 but that was actually for two students so the per student cost would be $750. Some of the students received small engines, tools and even a lathe from their correspondence school, which allowed them some practical training.

The average course cost came to $170. That included three students who had exceptionally expensive courses. If you remove those costs then the average course cost arrives at $128.

The total budget for vocational this year comes to $120,000 and the total correspondence was $16,000.

Special Students

One of the positive aspects of this project was the opportunities it gave to special needs students: those handicapped, and those disadvantaged.

Some statistics on both groups shows this ratio:

A. Disadvantaged --15% of those in correspondence were in this group
--there were no dropouts

[1]There were actually 42 students over the two years but some took two-year courses.

B. Handicapped --21% of those in correspondence were handicapped
--8% of regular vocational hours were handicapped
--60% of those handicapped were in correspondence
--47% of those handicapped were in vocational
(there was some overlapping)
--There were no dropouts among this group

Normally these students would be considered "high risk" but they showed great interest and ability to stick to their courses. It gave many of them a chance to explore a variety of courses. Some students completed several exploratory ones. This might be the place to emphasize the development which took place during the project. The exploratory aspect has proved to be a major part of the correspondence project. It has turned out that even after the grant had run out, many students were coming in to check out areas of interest. They might try many subjects just as explorers. This lends flexibility to a small school. As was stated in the final report there is no way to "counsel" a student into the perfect matching course or vocation. They change easily and this gives them an area to "try their wings" where they are free to search on their own. Some Armed Services Courses could be used by many students. This saves money in the long run.

Dropouts:

It can be said that this is not a problem with this project. The rate is usually high among college level correspondence programs. One college nearby dropped it's high school correspondence a few years ago because "it wasn't worth the trouble" according to one source. This must have included dropouts and those who didn't finish. An example among the college level correspondence dropout rate shows it to be about 60%. This includes about 10% who simply quit during the first couple of weeks and get their money refunded and about 50% who simply do not finish for a variety of reasons. Some of them given were: lack of motivation, false expectations about the program, other priorities, etc. As said earlier, there were no school dropouts during the project and only 14% didn't finish due to delays from the correspondence school; not because of lack of interest or ability. Some finished one and then started another but counldn't complete it on time. Overall the course dropout rate was not a serious factor at Liberty in this program.

Interest:

The percentage of involvement from the student body doubled from the first year to the second. The first year there was 11% of the student body enrolled in correspondence. The next year it rose to 24%. There is still growing interest among students. The actual figures are: 19 students the first year and 42 the second year.

Male/Female Roles:

The correspondence courses offer a change from the typical vocations for men and women. So far, the females have taken advantage of that prospect but the men haven't in the correspondence program:

38% of correspondence population was female
25% of the females were in non-traditional courses (i.e. diesel mechanics)
There were no males in non-traditional areas.

The regular vocational program at Liberty does show that:

8% of the girls are in non-traditional classes
15% of the boys are in non-traditonal classes (i.e. shorthand)

It must be said that the staff at Liberty encourages the breaking of stereotypes through counseling and just the attitude of the female faculty members who urge girls to try any field they want to! There is a conscious effort on the part of the faculty to have both boys and girls trying areas of interest rather than areas that past tradition dictates.

Motivation:

One of the long standing goals of our education has been to individualize instruction, this is not an easy task, but the correspondence program offers a chance at more individualized instruction and rapport between students and faculty. There were two teachers who had classes with just correspondence students in them. They worked with each student to try to motivate and encourage. It has helped. More needs to be done in this area, the students still are a bit lost when they first have this freedom of working at their own pace. But there were other people involved to support those teachers. First of all there was a part-time secretary/aide (paid $1,000. out of the grant). Her job was to oversee the students and help them with any questions they had about materials or their assignments. Her help turned out to be invaluable to the students as they would come with their complaints and their successes and always receive a "pat on the back". This meant much to them. The faculty was available for expertise when they could provide it. Of course, they weren't always able to answer a question but they did many times during the course of the project.

There was also a volunteer aide who floated from student to student and dealt with questions and problems and simply plugged in the spots where he was needed. The aide was also free to take the students on field experiences related to their courses. This proved to be very rewarding. One girl was taken on a field trip to a social service agency to get first hand information on her area of interest. Two girls were taken to a local business college and one is now enrolled for next fall. She even received a scholarship from that college. This is one aspect of the project which can be expanded upon. The idea was to give the students some contact with the working world and expose them to opportunities they would normally miss.

Another aspect of motivation was the daily log kept for a short time by the students. They had to fill out a daily time log which told how much time they spent on their correspondence that day and how they were progressing. The students had to be reminded to fill it out, but for the most part they cooperated and it was found that many did their correspondence on the weekend or after school, which they were free to do. This gave them flexibility and responsibility. As with all groups or students some did better than others. As time goes on there can be ways worked out to better motivate and guide the students. More volunteer aides would benefit the program and community involvement in specialized areas would provide expertise.

There was another bonus which became apparent at graduation. Several students received diplomas from their correspondence schools. This was impressive and showed the kind of seriousness the students had about their courses. Some received scholarships to colleges they were going to as a result of their correspondence interest. One of the key benefits of this kind of program is that handicapped students will be able to receive recognition for their accomplishment in correspondence which they would not otherwise receive in academic or athletic capacities.

With the correspondence program there are students who can increase their self-image and have a chance to explore and search for areas of interest and talent they might not have a chance to do in a limited vocational program. The lesson of self-esteem may be an overlooked bonus to this idea.

Recommendations:

1. To continue funding the correspondence project at Liberty. This is proving to be cost effective in relation to regular vocational training and valuable to the entire student body as it opens doors to literally thousands of opportunities.
2. Attempt to monitor students with the help of volunteer aides and continue to provide field experiences and community support.
3. Speed up the feedback time from correspondence schools so delays won't hurt students.
4. Keep encouraging male and female interest in non-traditional roles.
5. Other small high schools start the same type of project.